

The Primary Lie

Patriots Ink Staff Writer

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In a recent debate, several Republican candidates for the presidential nomination called each other liars almost twenty times. At about the same time, the candidate for the Democratic nomination who was favored by the popular vote managed to capture most of the delegates from that state.

Here's how it's supposed to work.

People join a political party by registering. It's sort of like a club. Every so often the club gets together to democratically select who will represent them in the next election. People who aren't in the club can't vote; it isn't their club.

Once the party selects a nominee, they have a big convention. Here's how the convention works.

When the people vote for the person they want to run on their party ticket, they don't really vote for the man or woman who's running. They vote for a guy from their neighborhood to go to something called a *Convention* where it is expected that he will cast his vote in accordance with the popular vote, thereby *representing* them.

That was a very practical solution to a difficult problem 200 years ago. Furthermore, by electing a delegate, if things at the convention got sticky, the delegate could change his vote. For example, delegates who were selected based on the people's desire to select someone who eventually drops out between the primary vote and the convention would be trusted local people who would cast their vote in reflection of their best guess of who the second choice of their friends and neighbors might be.

Back at the convention, these delegates are called upon to cast their vote for the party nominee. The selection is made democratically and the candidate with the most delegates wins. In a deadlock, delegates normally can change their vote to make sure that someone is eventually selected. It's a simple and straightforward representative based democratic process. After the parties select their nominee, the chosen candidates of each party become candidates for president instead of candidates for the nomination and the election process begins.

That's how it's supposed to work. Democratically elected delegates democratically select the nominee. That's the lie – the *primary* lie.

Somewhere along the line, political parties invented something called a *super delegate*. These people are not elected by the voters. These people are appointed by the local party officials. These people do not represent the members of the club; they represent the managers of the club.

In each party and in each state, the numbers of these super delegates differ, but the effect is the same: the voice of the individual is diluted, if not suppressed, by the voice of the party management. The actual numbers fluctuate and are sometimes unclear. There are differences between the parties as well.

The Democratic Party Super Delegates include: 20 distinguished party leaders, 20 Democratic governors, 47 Democratic members of the United States Senate, 193 Democratic members of the United States House of Representatives, and 432 members of the Democratic National Committee.

The Republican Party Super Delegates include three members each of each State's Republican Party (150 plus territories). In order to preserving the process of representative selection, at least during the first round of voting at the convention, these delegates must vote the way their state voted. Of course, if a candidate for the nomination dropped out, then they can vote for whomever they wish.

It doesn't matter if you think that the party management should have a say in the nomination process or not. It doesn't matter if you think that the Republican Super Delegate is more representative of the wishes of the voter than the Democratic Super Delegate.

What matters is that the portrayal of the Primary election process being a reflection of the will of the voters is a lie – the Primary Lie.

Footnote: We call it the Primary lie with the innuendo being intentional – for it is the first lie of many more to come. At least the Republican's at the debate got that part right.